2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
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his vessel pays practically no port dues. His dates can therefore be warehoused in the dhow, until the market can easily absorb them.

The dhow trade is "native" trade, a stubborn plant which has been growing a long, long time. Nearly all the cargoes carried in dhows are for the native bazaars, and almost never for European account. Much of the cargoes consists of goods which the dhow captain himself, or some merchant or merchants travelling with him, sells for his own profit. The dhow is a peddler, as well as a carrier; a storehouse, as well as a ship; a means of livelihood to travelling merchants, as well as to her crew proper. Basra dates, though the most important outward cargo,[1] are only one source of revenue: there are a host of others, not necessarily always legitimate.

Kuwaiti owners of date plantations on the nearby Basra river play a considerable part in the financing of deep-sea dhows, though in most cases the captains, called *nakhodas*, are at least the nominal owners. It suits the merchants well that the *nakhodas* should regard themselves as the owners, for this provides them with a cheap form of insurance. If the dhow be lost it is the *nakhoda's* loss, and not the merchant's, for the poor captain must pay back not only the value of the dhow but the advance of freight given him to finance his voyage. Since Islam forbids all forms of ordinary insurance, this arrangement is to the merchant's liking. The *nakhodas* must accept it, for in most cases there is no other way by which they can acquire a big dhow.

In Kuwait, immediately prior to the outbreak of World War II, there was beginning to be some restiveness about this, and an association of the *nakhodas* had the temerity to issue its demands upon the merchants. These included payment of demurrage when unduly delayed at the loading berths in Basra (a dhow might be kept for weeks waiting for her cargo), a sliding scale of freights for different ports instead of the customary flat rate of 1.5 or 2 rupees a package regardless of destination, liability for the return of advances to cease with the loss of the ship, two competent officers for every seagoing dhow, and so forth. The demands represente

[1] Crew requirements and the very measurements of the dhows themselves are reckoned in terms of dates. A sailor to each 100 packages is the general rule, in Kuwait, and a dhow is spoken of there as having a capacity for 2,000 packages of dates, rather than as being of 100 tons burden.

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-1939) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
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a bare minimun, surely, and no more than a nakhoda's right, but the merchants' answer was that if the nakhodas could make new rules, so also could they; and they had the real power. I do not think the attempt of the nakhodas got them very far.

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While the dates are generally carried both to India and East Africa on a freight basis, nearly all other cargo is bought to the ship's own account and peddled to best advantage. The merchants have a substantial share in the dhow's earnings, apart from the sailor's own ventures, which are limited to what they can stow in a sea chest on the poop. As far as I was able to discover -- and I was more than twelve months sailing in deep-sea dhows -- the freight from the dates, on the typical African voyage, is used to finance a cargo of salt from Aden and to purchase odds and ends which might earn a profit in the bazaars of the Benadir coast and Kenya Colony. At the same time, the dhow carries all the passengers she can prevail upon to make a voyage, anywhere, for the Arab of Oman, and the Hadhramaut in particular, is an inveterate wanderer, and every dhow is a passenger vessel by the mere possession of deck enough to lie upon.

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The salt is sold in the best market that offers between the Hadhramaut coast and Zanzibar. At the same time, the nakhoda does what trading he can in anything which he knows, from past experience, will command a market. The average dhow never leaves the Gulf without at least some carpets, allegedly Persian but generally of either Italian or English origin, which are used both as trade and as bribes. Cooking stones, ghee, live sheep, cows, sacks of rice and flour, dried fish, haberdashery of all sorts, brassware, cheap enamelware, Arab confectionery -- all these may be aboard, either as ship's ventures or as the crew's, generally the latter.

Every man of the crew concentrates on goods which can be bought cheaply in the free port of Aden, adulterated if possible in transit, and sold to the Somali or Swahili shopkeepers whose little stores abound in every port along the coast of East Africa, from Haifun in the north (which the Italians called Dante) to Mikindani in the south, which is about as far south as the Arabs sail in these days. Only Indian dhows go further, to Madagascar and the Comorin Islands. Gaily coloured turbans of the correct style

2. Villers T-8 (1938-39) 1949 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1

MA 471 426 565 When a deep-sea dhow is built, at least some of the money is put up by the *nakhoda* himself and his family. It is the first essential of the *nakhoda* that he should be from a family of standing in the community, which will pay its debts. Just why such families cannot finance a dhow by themselves I was unable to discover, but the Arab, apparently, has no objection to carrying on business under a cumbersome structure of debt. The merchant, backed by the Sheikh or the ruling family, backs the *nakhoda's* family, who support in turn a trusted and experienced member to take command of the dhow.

MA 565 871 857 It is customary for the boys in such families to go to sea while very young, but they never work as sailors. They are always privileged: no sailor can become a deep-sea *nakhoda*, since obviously if his family is of standing, he would never serve before the mast. The children sail with him sometimes from the age of six or seven, though not regularly. They will make one or two long voyages, looking on and learning but not actually doing anything; then they will remain at home a year or two before going out again. They take command very young. Schooling, at least in 1939, was normally restricted to the local Koranic schools, and rarely occupied more than three months in the year. Only merchants' sons went to the colleges of Iraq, Egypt, and Syria.

MA 565 554 505 Gradually the head of a *nakhoda's* family may attain the status of a lesser merchant himself, though his merchandise is generally limited to the wherewithal to build ships, which comes up in his own dhows from the Malabar coast. But a *nakhoda* himself almost never becomes a merchant, and a merchant's son never becomes a *nakhoda*. Nevertheless, the profession of conducting deep-sea dhows about the waters of the Indian Ocean is a highly respected one, and the shipmasters of Kuwait are, on the whole, a very competent and knowledgeable class, though few of them can practice much astronomical navigation. Even their long voyages down to Zanzibar or to Calicut are coasting, really down with one monsoon, and back with the other, almost always in sight of land. Their real ability consists in their local knowledge, both of ports and trade.

MA [487] K MA 505 565 In Kuwait, in 1939 — as now — there were upwards of 10,000 qualified deep-sea sailors. An astonishingly high proportion is of

426 clean-cut in Villiers' case, as all the shares of the *nakhoda* and the mate
465 come from the crew's half of the net earnings. On the 240-ton *sambuk El Wafi*, which I boarded in Aden in 1950, the shares were as follows:[89]

	Value of Share	*Number of Shares*	*Total Shares*
Nakhoda (captain)	4	1	4
Serang (mate)	2	1	2
Sukkani (quartermaster or helmsman)	1½	3	4½
Muqaddam (boatswain)	1¼	1	1¼
Katib (clerk)	1½	1	1½
Wakil (steward)	1¼	1	1¼
Bakri or *mallah* (sailors)	1	33	33
Total shares			47½

In India some crews are paid on a salary basis, but many others work on a share basis. However, in India the owner takes one-third of whatever the ship earns. Then the craft's expenses while she was at sea and the supplies for the crew are deducted from the remaining two-thirds; the remainder is then divided among the captain and crew according to shares.[90] By dividing the profits in this manner the Indian owner gets about a quarter less than the Arab, while the Indian crew gets about ten per cent more.

471 The largest importer and exporter in Aden, and probably the whole
426 Gulf of Aden for that matter, is A. Besse and Company, operated by a
465 shrewd Frenchman, Mr. Antone Besse. Among Besse's various holdings in the Middle East are twelve dhows, all registered in Aden. The *El Wafi* was one of the twelve *sambuks* owned by A. Besse, and operated in the Gulf of Aden and the lower Red Sea. On the average these dhows made four trips a month. The *nakhoda* was given advances, which he in turn gave to the crew, before each trip. After four trips the gross return for

505 [89] It will be noted that the Arabic names in Villiers' list of the members of the crew on a Kuwait *bhum* and in my list of the members of the crew of an Aden *sambuk* are not the same; however,
104 this does not mean that either is necessarily wrong. The Arabic names on my list were checked from three independent sources in Aden, and my informants in Aden recognized Villiers' *mu'allim*
114 as the word the Kuwaiti used for 'mate.' Villiers indicated on his list 'quartermaster' but did not give the Arabic for the word. The Arabic word that I found in use in Aden for this member of the crew was *sukkani*, which comes from *sukkan*, the Arabic for 'rudder.' Thus it would seem that the more proper translation of the word is 'rudder-man' or 'helmsman,' although his position on the dhow is really that of 'quartermaster.' The word *muqaddam* is the word commonly used on land to refer to a 'headman' who is the leader of any other group of working-men. However, on a dhow the *muqaddam* is the man who superintends the letting go and the weighing of the anchor, so the translation of the word when applied to seafaring men is properly 'boatswain.' The important fact evident from the two lists is that there is always a consistency in the top officers of a dhow—there are a captain, a mate, three quartermasters (or helmsmen), and a boatswain, irrespective of the Arabic names by which they are known.

[90] K. B. Vaidya, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

4; Bowen C-S (1958) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

the cargo the dhow had hauled was figured and the cost of the food consumed by the officers and crew was deducted, giving the net earning of the dhow. One-half belonged to the crew and was divided into forty-seven and one-half shares as shown above. The other half belonged to the owner, and represented his return on his investment; the owner had to maintain the dhows from his half of the earnings. As we saw above in the case of the figures presented by Villiers, the owner has little to deduct from his share of the ship's earnings, so his return on his investment is considerable. It is little wonder that Mr. A. Besse was recently able to give Oxford University a contribution of £2,000,000!

Over one hundred years ago, the French Admiral F. E. Paris spent considerable time in the waters around Muscat and wondered how Arab ships could at that time compete with the more efficient European sailing ships. Paris summed up his conclusions as follows:

> ... les Arabs qui les montent habitués au retour périodique des moussons, n'exécutent, en general, qu'un voyage par an ... [ils] entendent bien le commerce; malgré cela, ils sont rarement employés par les Europeans ... et, comme ils ne prennent que de très-faibles cargaisons, ce n'est que grâce à l'extrême économie des Arabs qu'ils peuvent servir pour le commerce.[42]

Only a decade ago, one hundred years after Paris, men of other lands were still wondering how an Arab sailing fleet could possibly survive in the present era of oil and steam; to satisfy his curiosity Alan Villiers dedicated a year of his life to sailing with the Arabs in their dhows. Villiers has summed up the reasons for the survival of the dhow fleet as follows:

> One reason—perhaps the chief—why the ancient trade with the monsoons down the Indian Ocean not only survives but flourishes is that the dhows warehouse the goods they carry as well as transport them, and it suits the merchants better to have 10,000 packages of new season's dates divided among a fleet of dhows, than in the hold of one steamer which will unload the lot in a day or two, and flood the market. Ten thousand packages provide cargoes for at least five large dhows; the dhow master does not care how long he takes to discharge his cargo, for his overheads are trifling, his crew works on shares and handles all cargo, and his vessel pays practically no port dues.[43]

While in Aden in 1950, the writer investigated the intriguing problem of dhow economics, as applied to the coastal craft operating around

[42] F. E. Paris, *Essai sur la Construction Navale des Peuples Extra-Européens* (Paris, Bertrand, [1841]), p. 9. '... the Arabs who man them, accustomed to the periodic reversal of the monsoons, carry out, in general only one voyage a year ... they understand commerce well; in spite of that, they are rarely employed by Europeans ... and, as they carry only very poor cargoes, it is only because of the extreme economy of the Arabs that they can be of use for commerce.'

[43] A. Villiers, 'The Arab Dhow Trade,' *Middle East Journal*, II (1948), 400-401.